

Dear Chairs Abercrombie and Moore, Vice Chairs Lesser and Leeper, Ranking Members Berthel and Case, and Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Brook Smith and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for **S.B. 284 - An Act Increasing the Age from Eight to Eighteen Years for an Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status**. This bill would provide state-funded medical assistance to any child or young adult under the age of eighteen years of age, regardless of immigration status, whose household income does not exceed 201% of the federal poverty level, and who does not otherwise qualify for Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance 11 Program, or employer-sponsored insurance.

Connecticut's expansion of HUSKY last year to children ages 0-8 years was an important win for immigrants in the state, who have been predominantly challenged by the shortage of healthcare resources available to them. The passage of S.B 284 would expand this win by guaranteeing more access to programs like HUSKY that largely benefit low-income immigrant families and individuals. Undocumented immigrants without coverage must rely on health care safety net resources, such as public hospitals or community clinics, to access needed medical care. Despite serving as important access points, none of these resources is equivalent to having comprehensive health insurance coverage.

Undocumented children deserve the same opportunity at success as any other Americans, and that is impossible to achieve when they lack access to adequate healthcare. Currently Connecticut's HUSKY Health Programs restrict applicants' eligibility only American-born citizens, documented immigrants, and those who have held a green card for more than five years; this leaves 52% of undocumented immigrants in Connecticut without insurance. Those who are uninsured often delay or go without needed care, which can lead to worse health outcomes over the long-term that may ultimately be more complex and expensive to treat. This is categorically unfair to undocumented immigrants, who pay around 145 million dollars in Connecticut state and local taxes every year; undocumented taxpayers are contributing to the state's health programs, but their status makes them ineligible to access said state health programs. No one in Connecticut—or anywhere, for that matter—should have to fear deportation or economic ruin just to seek out life-saving medical care, especially during a global pandemic that has been especially detrimental to the immigrant community.

In conclusion, I urge you to expand healthcare to the immigrant population because it would allow them to receive the preventative treatment they deserve, reduce the uninsured rate in Connecticut, and save the state money by decreasing uncompensated care costs. Connecticut can and should do better in promoting healthcare as a human right, rather than a commodity that only the wealthy can afford. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Human Services

Committee so that more immigrants in the state are able to access and afford the healthcare of which they are in desperate need.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Brook Smith
New Haven, CT